

A-4 Decorah (Iowa) Journal Thurs., June 2, 1988

CIA general counsel feels editorial one-sided

Dear Editor:

I read with interest your editorial "CIA Must Stop Undermining U.S." The editorial follows a lecture given at Luther College by Philip Agee, a former CIA officer. That lecture is described in a news article you published two days earlier.

Obviously, I was not present at Mr. Agee's lecture. Thus, I do not know exactly what he said that evening. Moreover, I do not wish to suggest that Mr. Agee does not have the right to present any facts and arguments that he wishes on this issue. I feel compelled to respond, however, because it appears that limited facts led to unwarranted conclusions in your editorial.

Initially, it should be noted that Mr. Agee left the CIA in 1968, and, therefore, he has not had legitimate access to classified information since that date. I also believe it is relevant that Mr. Agee's passport was revoked by the U.S. Government in 1979 because he caused "serious damage to the national security and foreign policy of the United States." (Mr. Agee was engaged in a campaign to expose the identities of CIA officers overseas. One officer identified by Mr. Agee was murdered in Greece by a terrorist group; several others were later attacked after being publicly identified.) The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the revocation of Mr. Agee's passport in 1981, and he now travels under a Nicaraguan passport.

Your editorial states that through covert actions the CIA has "become as hostile to democratic principals as Russia's KGB" and concludes that the CIA "represents a 'cancer' in our democratic system that must be checked." Moreover, the editorial urges "the American people (to) protest loudly their disgust WITH THE DIRECTION THE CIA IS HEADING." (Emphasis added.) I do not believe that these conclusions withstand scrutiny.

Since 1975, the Hughes-Ryan Amendment (named for a former Senator from Iowa) has required the President to find that each proposed covert action by the CIA is "important to national security of the United States."

Further, a National Security Decision Directive issued by the President provides that each proposed covert action must be reviewed by cabinet and subcabinet level officials before it is submitted to the President for approval. Thus, all CIA covert actions are now conducted pursuant to review and approval by the President and other senior Administration officials -- a condition that did not exist when Mr. Agee resigned from the CIA.

Judge William H. Webster, who became the Director of Central Intelligence ("DCI") in May 1987, has also issued guidance, emphasizing the importance of internal CIA review of proposed covert actions.

A senior level policy group within the CIA reviews all proposed covert actions before they are forwarded to the President for approval. In addition to operational questions, the review group considers such issues as the consistency of a proposed covert action with U.S. foreign policy and whether an action will seem sensible to the American people if it becomes public.

Once approved by this review group, a covert action proposal is forwarded to the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, and then to the DCI for approval.

Existing statutes further provide that proposed

covert actions be reported to Congress. Normally, this occurs prior to the initiation of a covert action. In only three instances since 1975 has a President delayed notice to Congress until after a covert activity took place -- once by President Reagan; twice by President Carter. Each instance involved attempts to secure the release of American hostages held by Iran or groups associated with Iran.

The congressional intelligence committees, which have oversight responsibility for CIA activities, also receive regular briefings on CIA covert action activities. Consequently, they have far more information on current CIA activities than is available to Mr. Agee. On the basis of this information, Congress annually authorizes and appropriates money to support CIA activities, including covert actions.

In 1975, two congressional committees considered all of the CIA activities your news article says were described in Mr. Agee's lecture. As a result of that review, Congress considered, but rejected, proposals that would have prohibited the U.S. Government from conducting covert actions. Instead, Congress imposed the "finding" and notice requirement described above.

Last summer, the joint congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra matter again considered the issue of covert actions. In their report, the Iran-Contra Committees concluded that "covert operations are a necessary component of our nation's foreign policy ... (so long as they) supplement, not replace, diplomacy and normal instruments of foreign policy." The committees also concluded that "covert operations are compatible with democratic government if they are conducted in an accountable manner and in accordance with (U.S.) law."

In short, the conduct of covert actions is not solely the responsibility of the CIA; they reflect the judgment of the President and the Congress that such activities are important to the U.S. national security interests.

I do not suggest that covert actions are without controversy. Indeed, the efficacy and propriety of such activities are the legitimate subject of debate. But the debate should not be as one-sided as your editorial would suggest.

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Former CIA agent was 'true' believer

When Phillip Agee, a former Central Intelligence Agency officer, watched Oliver North during the Iran-Contra hearings, he saw a mirror image of himself 20 years ago.

"I was so embarrassed," he said. "I used to be just like him. I was a true believer, too. I saw everything in black and white."

Agee spoke to a crowd of about 200 at Luther College Sunday night about his transformation from an eager intelligence agent to a man living in exile because of his critical writings about the CIA.

His books include "Inside the Company," an account of the CIA's undercover activities in Latin America, and "Dirty Work" and "Dirty Work II," expositions of similar activities in Africa and Europe. Last year, he published "On the Run," an account of his efforts to expose the illegal acts committed by the CIA.

"Last summer, I came back for the first time in more than 15 years. My attorneys had advised me to stay away because they believed there had been a secret criminal indictment against me because I had refused to submit my books for censorship. They felt that the minute I stepped back here, I would be put in jail," Agee said. "But I decided to run the risk. I wanted to see if I could talk to people face to face and tell them some of the truths about the CIA."

East target

During his presentation, Agee described how he, as a college student at Notre Dame, had been an easy target for the CIA's recruitment efforts. "I had always been taught by my family to conform, become a good member of society, and not

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CIA

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make waves," he said. "I was the perfect candidate for the CIA."

When he joined the agency in the early 1960s, Agee willingly signed a secrecy agreement, promising to keep his knowledge about covert operations to himself - except if he had official approval to release information.

Agee's first overseas assignment was in Ecuador where he acted as a political officer at the embassy while doing covert political action on the side. He found out that the CIA was not exactly a philanthropic organization.

"We paid journalists to present our materials as if they were their own. We set up trade unions, and paid the salaries of presidents and vice presidents," he claimed.

During his six years in Latin America, Agee had to maintain a subversive control watch list, a file of the CIA's primary enemies in the host country. The file contained up-to-date photos and biographic information which could be used for the swift arrest of the enemies.

In Ecuador, he had to pass on the list, which was written in Spanish with no reference to the CIA, to the military government who used it to crush rebellion.

Impact

As he became aware of the impact of his work, it became increasingly difficult for Agee to perform his duties. He asked for other assignments, and was transferred to Mexico City in 1968 as the official Olympic attache - officially to prepare for the Olympics: unofficially to spot new contacts for the CIA. After the assignment ran out, he submitted his resignation.

"When I left, I had no intention of writing a book," he said, pointing out that he was tied by the secrecy agreement. "Writing a book was like thinking the unthinkable."

However, after starting a doctoral program in Latin American studies, he saw a need to go public with his information about how he felt the CIA changed the course of history in several Latin American countries.

Drawing on his inside information and extended study in the libraries of Paris and London, Agee pieced together information about the CIA's covert activities abroad. The project became even more urgent when he detected the same methods had been used in all covert action since the start of the agency in 1947.

Pearl Harbor

According to Agee, the CIA was formed as the direct result of the bombings at Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941. Investigations showed the attack could have been prevented if all the government's information had been in one place. "The attack showed a need to establish a civilian, professional intelligence service which would prevent another surprise attack in the future," he said.

"We in the CIA were experts in overthrowing democracies and replacing them by dictatorships," he charged, listing several examples. In 1953, he said, Iran's elected civil government was replaced by the regime of the Shah through CIA-supported paramilitary maneuvers. In 1963, he said, the CIA helped replace the civilian government in Brazil with a military dictatorship.

And, when Salvador Allende was elected president of Chile in 1970, he said, the CIA immediately set the stage for his overthrow by Pinochet three years later.

"Why is it necessary for us to be involved in these types of activities? What do we gain by the senseless murder of defenseless peasants?" Agee asked.

In Agee's opinion, there is a need for an intelligence service, but its primary purpose should be to keep peace.

Noting the recent surge in political activism on college campuses, Agee told students at Luther, "You are the future activists of America. Don't think a vote every four years is going to make a difference. It is a lifelong commitment. But if you don't make it, you leave it open to the other side."

County to end contract spraying with own program

B-2 Decorah (Iowa) Journal Thurs., April 28, 1988

CIA must stop undermining U.S.

It should be embarrassing to every patriotic American that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency has become about as hostile to democratic principles as Russia's KGB.

About as sacred as the Ten Commandments as a model for a good and just Christian life was the admonition to "practice what you preach." Another good lesson for life was the advice that "it doesn't do any good to go to church on Sunday if you don't live your religion during the week."

The CIA doesn't practice democracy in its covert actions. It doesn't pay any attention to such idealistic goals. Certainly, secrecy must be maintained, but not at the expense of our system. It practices expediency.

A few telling revelations about clandestine operations of the nation's intelligence agency were made here Sunday night by former CIA agent Philip Agee, who addressed about 200 people in a talk at Luther College.

Agee resigned from the CIA because he could no longer stomach the duplicity of his organization. Since then he has written several books exposing the CIA's bizarre activities.

He revealed the unbelievable efforts to topple democracies and support dictatorships throughout the world. Wouldn't you think that would be playing right into the hands of the rival Soviet KGB?

Why challenge the KGB as the world's "bad guys?" Stirring up trouble around the world only makes enemies, and what's wrong with trying to recruit more friends around the world among struggling Third World countries than struggling to retain our traditional allies?

None of our former staunch friends are very happy with our current foreign policy. We're like a "bull in a china shop," and it just doesn't fit the image of a peace-loving nation.

This distorted emphasis by the CIA probably won't end until a new administration takes over in Washington next year, but in the meantime the American people should protest loudly their disgust with the direction the CIA is heading.

Why can't we be proud again of our federal agencies and institutions? The CIA, besides a major embarrassment, represents a "cancer" in our democratic system that must be checked.